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APPLE LORE.

THE apple has always been one of the most popular of fruits. Poets have sung its praises and prose-writers have dwelt upon its virtues. Naturally, there has gathered round it a not inconsiderable body of folklore, and in connection with its culture are still preserved and maintained customs and practices directly derived from the pagan festivals and sacrifices of old.

It used to be the custom in Devonshire and the other western fruit-producing counties to perform a sacrifice to the apple-tree on Twelfth Night. In the evening the farmer's family and their friends assembled and partook of wheaten cakes, or of toasted bread, dipped in cider. They then went into the orchard, one of the party carrying hot cake or bread and cider, to be offered to the principal tree. The cake was placed on a forked branch, and the cider was thrown over it. While this was being done, the assembled men fired off their muskets, pistols, or any other firearms which they could muster, and the women and children shouted excitedly some such rhyme as the following :

Health to thee, old Apple-tree !
From every bough, give us apples enow,
Hats full, caps full, bushel bushel bags full.
Hurrah ! hurrah !

In Sussex, in the apple-growing districts, a somewhat similar ceremony, so far as regards the chanted or shouted invocation, used to be and perhaps still is performed. It was known as 'worsling'—that is, wassailing the apple-trees, and was generally performed by boys, to whom the farmers always gave pence, as it was considered unlucky to omit the ceremony. Herrick, in his *Hesperides*, thus refers to the superstition and the object for which the ceremony was performed :

Wassale the trees that they may beare
You many a plum and many a pear;
For more or lesse fruits they will bring,
As you do give them wassailing.

Aubrey the antiquary, writing in 1688, remarks

that he had often seen in Herefordshire, and also in Somerset, on Midsummer Eve, fires burning in the fieldpaths in order to bring a blessing upon the apples and other crops. Grimm says that to this day at a fruit-gathering in Holstein five or six apples are left hanging on each tree, in order that the next year's produce may be plentiful. This is evidently a sacrifice to the god who blessed the crop. All these practices are doubtless remains of the old Roman worship of Ceres.

Pennant, in his *Tour in Scotland*, describes a custom then observed similar to the Devonshire ceremony, and says that the men finished the rite by drinking their master's health with good wishes for the success of future harvests, and eating caraway and other seeds soaked in cider as a reward for their toil in seed-time. 'This,' he says, 'seems to resemble a custom of the ancient Danes, who, in their addresses to their rural deities, emptied, on every invocation, a cup in honour of them.' The delectable brew known as 'lamb's-wool,' which used to be drunk on Twelfth Night and on Michaelmas Eve, was made with ale, sugar, nutmeg, cloves, and other spices, and roasted apples. Each person present took an apple with a spoon, ate it, and then drank the health of the company from the bowl. Herrick says :

Next crown the bowl full
With gentle lamb's-wool;
Add sugar, nutmeg, and ginger,
With store of ale, too.

The reader will remember Dr Primrose's visit to neighbour Flamborough's on Michaelmas Eve, when the goose and dumplings were fine, and the lamb's-wool, even in the opinion of Mrs Primrose, who was a connoisseur, was excellent.

Another survival and development of ancient superstition is to be found in the widespread use of the apple in divination. In Scotland and in England the apple is a very popular divining medium in love matters. Part of this popularity is probably due to the common notion that the tree of knowledge of good and evil was an

apple-tree. Horace mentions the use of apple-pips in love affairs. A lover would take a pip between the finger and thumb and shoot it up to the ceiling; and if it struck it, his or her wish would be accomplished. Nowadays a maiden tests the fidelity of her beloved by putting a pip in the fire, at the same time pronouncing his name. If the pip bursts with a report, it is a sign that he loves her; but should it burn silently, she is convinced of his want of true affection for her. This is often performed with nuts instead of pips. Gay's *Hobnelia* experiments with the pips by placing one on each cheek, one for Lubberkin, and the other for Boobyclocl:

But Boobyclocl soon drops upon the ground,
A certain token that his love's unsound;
While Lubberkin sticks firmly to the last.

Gay also mentions the very common amusement of paring an apple without breaking the peel and then throwing the strip over the left shoulder, in order to see the initial letter of the lover's name formed by the shape the paring takes upon the ground. This is often one of the many divinations duly practised on Halloween or All-Saints' Eve. Another way at the same season is for the curious maiden to stand before a looking-glass combing her hair with one hand and eating an apple held in the other; the face of the future husband will then be seen in the glass looking over her left shoulder. Mrs Latham, in her *Sussex Superstitions*, gives another apple charm. Every person present fastens 'an apple on a string, hung and twirled round before a hot fire. The owner of the apple that first falls off is declared to be upon the point of marriage; and as they fall successively, the order in which the rest of the party will attain to matrimonial honours is clearly indicated; single-blessedness being the lot of the one whose apple is the last to drop.'

The 'christening of the apples' is an event looked for by country-folk; but there seems to be considerable diversity of opinion as to the correct date for the 'christening.' To ensure a good crop, the rain ought to fall upon them on St James's Day, say some; on St Peter's Day, say others; while a third party, regardless of the dreadful consequences of rain on such a day, say that St Swithin's is the proper time. In the west, there is a belief that on St Swithin's Day the apples undergo a change; that having been flavourless, they then become fruity and pleasant to the taste and fit for use. 'Apple-drain' is a very common and expressive name for a wasp among the Devonshire peasantry. Peter Pindar, in his *Royal Visit to Exeter*, speaks of 'bullocks stung by apple-drains.'

The apple appears occasionally in folk-medicine. In Lincolnshire a very common remedy for weak eyes is a poultice made of rotten apples. In the same part of the world, warts are cured by rubbing them nine times with an apple cut into nine pieces; the sections of the fruit are reunited and buried, and as they decay, so it is thought the warts will disappear. The notion that these excrescences can be cured by being rubbed with apple sections, or with a green elder stick or

a bean-shell, if the substance used is buried or left to rot, is found in many parts of the country. An old *Collection of Receipts in Physick and Surgery*, dated 1759, gives the following 'For a blow, or hurt in the eye:' 'Beat the leaves of eyebright with a rotten apple; lay it on the eye as a poultis: repeat it as it grows dry. I think the juice of the eyebright is best.' The euphrasia, or eyebright, was long considered a powerful medicine for all affections of the eye. Milton makes the Archangel Michael purge 'with euphrasy and rue' Adam's visual nerve. An old writer, Lovell, in his *Herball*, 1665, says that 'the ointment of apples softens and supples the roughness of the skin, and heals the chaps of the lips, hands, face, and other parts; also it whitens and smooths the skin, when sunburnt and rough with the north wind.' Mr W. G. Black, in his work on *Folk-Medicine*, mentions a New England charm for ague that had been sent to him by an American correspondent. The patient was to take a string made of woollen yarn, of three colours, and to go by himself to an apple-tree; there he was to tie his left hand loosely with the right to the tree by the string, then to slip his hand out of the knot and run into the house without looking behind him. This is an instance of the very old and general belief that disease can be cured by its transference either to an animal of a lower order or to some stationary object such as a tree.

There used to be a curious custom observed on Easter Sunday at Northmore, near Witney, in Oxfordshire. After evening service, men and women threw quantities of apples into the churchyard; and those persons who had been married during the year had to throw three times as many as any of the rest. After this was done, they all adjourned to the minister's house to eat bread and cheese and drink ale. The minister, it may be noted, was always expected to have the best cheese he could get. Dr Bliss, in his edition of the *Reliquiae Hearniana*, wherein the custom is mentioned, says that it was still kept up in 1822. What it meant, or whether it be now practised, we know not.

The importance in the fruit-growing counties of a good crop has naturally given rise to many proverbial sayings connected with the apple-tree. In Devonshire the people say:

If good apples you would have,
The leaves must be in the grave.

That is, the trees should be planted after the fall of the leaf. This appears in a slightly different form in Ray's *Proverbs*. A common notion is that if the sun shines through the apple-trees on Christmas Day, there will be a plentiful crop in the ensuing year. Blossom in March is a bad sign.

If the apple-tree blossoms in March,
For barrels of cider you need not search.

But if the tree blossom in May, 'you can eat apple dumplings every day.' Or, as another version has it, 'you may eat 'em night and day.' It is considered a very bad omen to see both blossom and fruit at the same time on an apple-tree, this being regarded as a sure sign of death to one of the family before the following spring. Sometimes, however, the prognostication appears

in the form of the following saying, which is so very vague that it need not cause alarm to any one :

A bloom upon the apple-tree when the apples are ripe,
Is a sure termination to somebody's life.

THIS MORTAL COIL.

CHAPTER XLVII.—FORTUNE OF WAR.

At Monte Carlo, on the other hand, day dawned serene and calm and cloudless. Hugh Massinger rose, unmindful of his far-away Suffolk sandhills, and gazed with a pleasant dreamy feeling out of the window of his luxurious first-floor bedroom. It was a strange outlook. On one side, the ornate and overloaded Parisian architecture of that palace of Circe, plumped down so grotesquely, with its meretricious town-bred airs and graces, among the rugged scenery of the Maritime Alps : on the other side, the inaccessible crags and pinnacles of the Tête-de-Chien, gray and lonely as any mountain side in Scotland or Savoy—the actual terminus of the main range of snow-clad Alps, whose bald peaks topple over sheer three thousand feet into the blue expanse of the Mediterranean, that washes the base of their precipitous bluffs. The contrast was almost ludicrous in its quaint extremes.

He did not wholly approve the desecration. Hugh Massinger's tastes were not all distorted. Dissipation to him was but a small part and fraction of existence. He took it only as the mustard of life—an agreeable condiment to be sparingly partaken of.—The poet's instinct within him had kept alive and fresh his healthy interest in simpler things, in hill and dale, in calm and peaceful country pleasures. After that feverish day of gambling at Monte Carlo, he would dearly have loved to rise early and saunter out alone for a morning walk ; to scale before breakfast the ramping cliffs of the Tête-de-Chien, and to reach the mouldering Roman tower of Turbia, that long mounted guard on the narrow path where Gaul and Italy marched together. But that hateful pile of gold and notes between the pillow and the mattress restrained his desire. It would be dangerous to wander among the lonely mountains with so large a sum as that concealed about his person ; dangerous to leave it unguarded at the hotel, or to entrust it to the keeping of any casual stranger. 'Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator,' he murmured to himself half aloud with a sigh of regret, as he turned away his eyes from that glorious semicircle of jagged peaks that bounded his horizon. He must stop at home and take care of his money-bags, like any vulgar cheesemongering millionaire of them all. Down, poet's heart, with your unreasonable aspirations for the lonely mountain heights ! Amaryllis and asphodel are not for you. Shoulder your muckrake with a manful smile, and betake you to the Casino where Circe calls, as soon as the great gate swings once more on its grating hinges. You cannot serve two masters. You have chosen Mammon to-day, and him you must worship. No mountain air for your lungs this morning ; but the close and crowded atmosphere of the roulette tables. Keep true to your creed for a little while longer : it is all for Elsie's sake ! —For Elsie ! For Elsie !—He withdrew his head

from the window with a faint flush of shame. Ah, heaven, to think he should think of Elsie in such a connection and at such a moment !

He dressed himself slowly and went down to breakfast. Attentive waiters, expectant of a duly commensurate tip, sniffing *pour-boire* from afar, crowded round for the honour of his distinguished orders. Raffalevsky joined him in the *salle-à-manger* shortly. The Russian was haggard and pale from sleeplessness : dark rings surrounded his glassy black eyes : his face was the face of a boiled codfish. No waiter hurried to receive his commands : all Monte Carlo knew him well already for a heavy loser. Your loser seldom overflows into generous tipping. Hugh beckoned him over to his own table : he would extend to the Russian the easy favour of his profuse hospitality. Raffalevsky seated himself in a sulky humour by the winner's side. He meant to play it out still, he said, to the bitter end. He couldn't afford to lose and leave off ; that game was for capitalists. For himself, he speculated—well—on borrowed funds. He must win all back or lose all utterly. In the latter case—a significant gesture completed the sentence. He put up his hand playfully to his right ear and clicked with his tongue, like the click of a revolver barrel. Hugh smiled responsive his most meaning smile. 'Espions toujours,' he murmured philosophically in his musical voice and perfect accent. No man on earth could ever bear with more philosophical composure than Hugh Massinger the misfortunes of others.

Before he left the breakfast-table that morning, a waiter presented the bill, all deferential politeness. 'I sleep here to-night again,' Hugh observed with a yawn, as he noted attentively the lordly conception of its various items. The waiter bowed a profound bow.—'At Monte Carlo, Monsieur,' he said significantly, 'one pays daily.'—Hugh drew out a handful of gold from his pocket with a laugh and paid at once. But the men disquieted him. Who wins to-day may lose to-morrow. Clearly the hotel at least had thoroughly learnt that simple lesson.

They filed in among the first at the doors of the Casino. Once started, Hugh played, with scarcely an intermission for food, till the tables closed again. He kept himself up with champagne and sandwiches. That was indeed a glorious day ! A wild success attended his hazards. He staked and won ; staked and lost ; staked and won ; staked and lost again. But the winnings by far outbalanced the losses. It went the round of the tables, in frequent whispers, that a young Englishman, a poet by feature, was breaking the bank with his audacious plunging. He plunged again, and again successfully. People crowded up from their own game at neighbouring boards to watch and imitate the too lucky Englishman. 'Give him his head ! He's in the vein !' they said. 'A man in the vein should always keep playing.' The young lady with the fine Pennsylvanian twang remarked with occidental plainness of speech that she 'wouldn't object to running a partnership.' Hugh laughed and demurred.—'You might dilute the luck, you know,' he answered good-humouredly. 'But if you'll hand me over a hundred louis, I don't mind putting them on 31 for you.' He did, and they won. The crowd of gamblers

applauded, all hushed, with their usual superstitious awe and veneration. 'He has the run of the numbers,' they said in concert. To gamblers generally, fate is a goddess, a living reality, with capricious likes and dislikes of her own. They are ever ready to back her favourite for the time being; they look upon play as a pre-destined certainty.

Raffalevsky meanwhile lost and lost with equal persistence. He drank as much champagne as Hugh; but the wine inspired no lucky guesses. When they came to count up their gains and losses at the end of the day, they found it was still a neck-and-neck race, in opposite ways, between them. Hugh had won altogether close on nine thousand pounds. Raffalevsky had lost rather more than eight thousand five hundred.

'Never mind,' Hugh remarked with his inexhaustible buoyancy. 'We're still to the good against his Monegasque Highness. There's a balance of something like five hundred pounds in our joint favour.'

'In other words,' Raffalevsky answered with a grim smile, 'you've won all my money and some other fellow's too. You're the sponge that sucks up all my lifeblood. I've got barely three thousand five hundred left. When that goes?'—And he repeated once more the same expressive suicidal pantomime.

That night, Hugh slept at Monte Carlo once more. He had lost all sense of shame and decency now. He sent off a note for two thousand francs to the people at the *pension*, just as a guarantee of good faith—as the newspapers say—and to let them know he was really returning. But he had formed a shadowy plan of his own by this time. He would wait another day at the Casino and go home to San Remo with Warren Relf by the train that reached there at 6.39—the train by which Elsie had said in her note he would be returning.

Why he wished to do so, he hardly with distinctness knew himself. Certainly he did not mean to pick a quarrel; he only knew in a vague sort of way he was going by that train; and until it started, he would keep on playing.

And lose every penny he'd won, perhaps! Why not leave off at once, secure of his eight thousand? Bah! what was eight thousand now to him? He'd win a round twenty before he left off—for Elsie.

So he played next day from morning till night; played, and drank champagne feverishly. Such luck had never been known at the tables. Old players stood by with observant faces and admired his vein. Was ever a system seen like his? Such judgment, they said; such restraint; such coolness!

But inwardly, Hugh was consumed all day by a devouring fire. His excitement at last knew no bounds. He drank champagne by the glassful to keep his nerve up. He had won before nightfall, all told, no less a sum than eleven thousand pounds sterling. What was the miserable remnant of Whitestrand, now, to him! Let Whitestrand sink in the sea for all he cared for it! He had here a veritable mine of wealth. He would go back to San Remo to bury Winifred—and return to heap up a gigantic fortune.

Eleven thousand pounds! A mere bagatelle. At five per cent. five hundred and fifty a year only!

His train was due to start at five. About four o'clock, Raffalevsky came up to him from another table. The Russian's face was white as death. 'I've lost all,' he murmured hoarsely, drawing Hugh aside. 'The whole, the whole, my three hundred thousand francs of borrowed capital!—And what's worse still, I borrowed it from the chest—government money—the treasury of the squadron! If I go back alive, I shall be court-martialed.—For heaven's sake, my friend, lend me at least a few hundred francs to retrieve my luck with!'

Hugh put his hand to his pile and drew out three notes of a thousand francs each—a hundred and twenty pounds sterling in all. It was nothing, nothing. 'Good luck go with them,' he cried good-humouredly. 'When those are gone, my dear fellow, come back for more. I'm not the man, I hope and trust, to turn my back upon a comrade in misfortune.'

The Russian snapped at them with a grateful gesture, but without hesitation or spoken thanks, and returned in hot haste to his own table. Gamblers have little time for needless talking.

At a quarter to five, after a last hasty draught of champagne at the buffet, Hugh turned to go out, with his cash in his pocket. In front of him, he saw just an apparition of Raffalevsky rushing wildly away with one hand upon his forehead. The man's face was awful to behold. Hugh felt sure the Russian had lost all once more, and been too much ashamed even to renew his application.

The great door swung slow upon its hinges, and Raffalevsky burst into the outer corridor, bowed from the room with great dignity, in spite of his frantic haste, by a well-liveried attendant. There is plenty of obsequiousness at Monte Carlo for every player, even if he has lost his last lousi.

They emerged once more upon the beautiful terrace, the glorious view, the pencilled palm-trees. All around, the sinking Italian sun lit up that fairy coast with pink and purple. Bay and rock and mountain-side showed all the more exquisite after the fetid air of those crowded gaming saloons. High up on the shoulders of the inaccessible Alps the great square Roman keep of Turbia gazed down majestically with mute contempt on the feverish throng of miserable idlers who poured in and out through the gaudy portals of the garish Casino. A serene delight pervaded Hugh Massinger's placid soul; he felt himself vastly superior to these human butterflies; he knew his own worth as he turned entranced from the marble steps to the beautiful prospect that spread everywhere unrolled like a picture around him. Poet as he was, he despised mere gamblers; and he carried eleven thousand pounds odd of winnings in notes in his pocket.

R'r'r! A sharp report! A cry! A concourse! Something uncanny had surely happened. People were running up where the pistol went off. Hugh Massinger turned with a shudder of disgust. How discomposing! The usual ugly Monte Carlo incident! Raffalevsky had shot himself behind the shade of the palm-trees.

The man was lying, a hideous mass, in a crimson pool of his own blood, prone on the ground—hit through the temple with a well-directed bullet. It was a horrid sight, and Hugh's nerves were

sensitive. If it hadn't been for the champagne, he would really have fainted. Besides, the train was nearly due. If you hover about where men have killed themselves, you're liable to be let in for whatever may happen to be the Monegasque equivalent for that time-honoured institution, our own beloved British coroner's inquest. He might be hailed as a witness. Is that law? Ay, marry, is it? Crowner's quest law! Better give it all a wide berth at once. The bell was ringing for the train below. With a sudden shudder, Hugh hurried away from the ghastly object. After all, he had done his best to save him—lent him or given him three thousand francs to retrieve his losses. It was none of his fault. If one man wins, another man loses. Luck, luck, the mere incalculable chances of the table! If their places had been reversed, would that morose, unsociable, ill-tempered Russian have volunteered to give him three thousand francs to throw away, he wondered? Never, never: 'twas all for the best. The Russian had lost, and he had won—eleven thousand pounds odd, for Elsie.

He rushed away and dashed headlong into the station. His own revolver was safe in his pocket. He carried eleven thousand pounds odd about him. No man should rob him without a fight between here and San Remo.

CHAPTER XLVIII.—AT BAY.

Honest folk give lucky winners a wide berth at the Casino railway station, lest they should be suspected of possible evil designs upon their newly got money. Hugh found, therefore, he could pick his own seat quite at will, for nobody seemed anxious to claim the dubious honour of riding alone with him. So he strolled along the train, humming a gay tune, and inspecting the carriages with an attentive eye, till he reached a certain first-class compartment not far from the front, where a single passenger was quietly seated. The single passenger made his heart throb; for it was Warren Relf—alone and unprotected.

He hardly knew why, but, flushed with wine and continued good fortune, he meant to ride back in that very carriage, face to face with the baffled and defeated serpent; for Hugh had already discounted his prospective victory. Warren was looking the opposite way, and did not perceive him. Hugh waited, therefore, till the train was just about to start from the station, and then he jumped in—too late for Warren, if he would, to change his carriage.

In a second, the painter turned round and recognised his companion. He gave a sudden start. At last the two men had met in earnest. A baleful light burned in Hugh's dark eye. His blood was up. He had run too fast through the whole diapason of passion. Roulette and champagne, love and jealousy, hatred and vindictiveness, had joined together to fire and inflame his heart. He was at white-heat of exultation and excitement now. He could hardly contain his savage joy. 'Have I found thee, O my enemy?' he cried out, half aloud. Another time, it was just the opposite way. 'Hast thou found me, O my enemy?' he had cried to Warren with an agonised cry at their last meeting in the club in London.

Warren Relf, gazing up in surprise, answered

him back never a word; he only thought to himself silently that he was not and had never been Hugh Massinger's enemy. From the bottom of his heart, the painter pitied him: he pitied him ten thousand times more than he despised him.

They stood at gaze for a few seconds. Then, 'Where have you been?' Hugh asked at last insolently. The champagne had put him almost beside himself. Drunk with wine, drunk with good fortune, he allowed his true nature to peep forth for once a little too obviously. He would make this fellow Relf know his proper place before gentlemen at last—a mere ignorant upstart, half way between a painter and a common

'To Paris,' Warren answered with curt decision. He was in no humour for a hasty quarrel to-day with this half-drunk madman.

'What for?' Hugh continued, as rudely as before. Then he added with a loud and ugly laugh: 'You need tell me no lies. I know already. I've found you out.—To see my cousin Elsie across to England.'

At the word, Warren's face fell somewhat ominously. He leaned back, half irresolute, in the corner of the carriage and played with twitching fingers at the leather window-strap. 'You are right,' he answered low, in a short sharp voice. 'I never lie. I went to escort Miss Challoner from you and San Remo.'

Hugh flung himself into an attitude of careless ease. This colloquy delighted him. He had the fellow at bay. He began to talk, as if to himself, in a low monologue. 'Heine says somewhere,' he observed with a sardonic smile, directing his observation into blank space, as if to some invisible third person, 'that he would wish to spend the evening of his days in a cottage by the sea, within sound of the waves, with his wife and children seated around him—and a large tree growing just outside his grounds, from whose branches might dangle the body of his enemy.'

Warren Relf sat still in constrained silence. For Elsie's sake, he would allow no quarrel to arise with this madman, flown with insolence and wine. He saw at once what had happened: Massinger was drunk with luck and champagne. But he would avoid the consequences. He would change carriages when they stopped on the frontier at Ventimiglia.

The bid for an angry repartee had failed. So Hugh tried again; for he *would* quarrel. 'A great many murders take place on this line,' he remarked casually, once more in the air. 'It's a dangerous thing, they tell me, for a winner at Monte Carlo to go home alone in a carriage by himself with one other passenger.'

Still Warren Relf held his peace, undrawn.

Hugh tried a third time. He went on to himself in a musing monologue. 'Any man who travels anywhere by train with a large sum of money about his person is naturally exposed to very great peril,' he said slowly. 'I've been to Monte Carlo, playing, to-day, and I've won eleven thousand pounds; eleven—thousand—pounds—sterling. I've got the money now about me. There it is, you see, in French bank-notes. A very large sum. Eleven—thousand—pounds—sterling.'

Still Warren said nothing, biting his lip hard, but with an abstracted air looked out of the

window. Hugh was working himself up into a state of frantic excitement now, though well suppressed. Fate had delivered his enemy plump into his hands, and he meant to make the very best use of his splendid opportunity.

'A fool in Paris once called in a barber,' he went on quietly, with a studious outer air of calm determination, 'and ordered him, for a joke, to shave him at once, with a pistol lying before him on the dressing-table. "If your hand slips and you cut my skin," the fool said, "I'll blow your brains out." To his surprise, the barber began without a word of reply, and shaved him clean with the utmost coolness. When he'd finished, the patient paid down ten pounds, and asked the fellow how he'd managed to keep his hand from trembling. "Oh," said the barber, "easy enough: it didn't matter the least in the world to me. I thought you were mad. If my hand had slipped, I knew what to do: I'd have cut your throat without one moment's hesitation, before you had time to reach out for your pistol. I'd say it was an accident; and any jury in all Paris would without a doubt at once have acquitted me."—The story's illustrative. I hope, Mr Relf, you see its applicability?'

'I do not,' Warren answered, surprised at last into answering back, and with an uneasy feeling that Massinger was developing dangerous lunacy. 'But I must beg you will have the goodness not to address your conversation to me any further.'

'The application of my remark,' Hugh went on to himself, groping with his hand in his pocket for his revolver, and withdrawing it again as soon as he felt quite reassured that the deadly weapon was safely there—'ought at once to be obvious to the meanest understanding. There are some occasions where homicide is so natural that everybody jumps at once to particular conclusion.—Observe my argument. It concerns you closely.—Many murders have taken place on this line—murders of heavy winners at Monte Carlo. Many travellers have committed murderous assaults on the persons of winners with large sums of money about them.—Now follow me closely. I give you fair warning.—If a winner with eleven thousand pounds in his pocket were to get by accident into a carriage with one other person, and a quarrel were by chance to arise between them, and the winner in self-defence were to fire at and kill that other person—do you think any jury in all the world would convict him for protecting his life from the aggressor? No, indeed, my good sir! In such a case, the other person's life would be wholly at the offended winner's mercy.—Do you follow my thought? Do you understand me now?—Aha, I expected so! Warren Relf, I've got you in my power. I can shoot you like a dog; I can do as I like with you.'

With a sudden start, Warren Relf woke up all at once to a consciousness of the real and near danger that thus unexpectedly and closely confronted him. It was all true; and all possible! Hugh was mad—or maddened at least with play and drink: he deliberately meant to take his enemy's life, and trust to the authorities accepting his plausible story that he was forced to do so in self-defence or in defence of his money.

'You blackguard!' the painter cried as the truth came home to him in all its naked ugliness, facing Hugh in his righteous indignation like an

angry lion. 'How dare you venture on such a cowardly scheme? How dare you concoct such a vile plot? How dare you confess to me you mean to put it into execution?'

'I'm a gentleman,' Hugh answered, smiling across at him still with a hideous smile of drunkenness, and fingering once more the revolver in his pocket. 'I'll shoot no man without due explanation and reason given. I'll tell you why. You've tried to keep Elsie out of my way all these long years for your own vile and designing purposes—to beguile and entrap that innocent girl into marrying *you*—such a creature as *you* are; and by your base machinations you've succeeded at last in gaining her consent to your wretched advances. How she was so lost to all sense of shame and self-respect—she, a Massinger on her mother's side—as to give her consent to such a degrading engagement, I can't imagine. But you extorted it somehow—by alternate threats and cringing, I suppose—by scolding her and cajoling her—by lies and by slanders—by frightening her and libelling *me*—till the poor terrified girl, tortured out of her wits, decided to accept you, at last, out of pure weariness. A Man would be ashamed, I say, to act as you have done; but a Thing like you—pah—there—it revolts me even to talk to you!'

Warren Relf's face was livid crimson with fiery indignation; but he would not do this drunken madman the honour of contradicting or arguing with him. Elsie to him was far too sacred and holy a subject to brawl over with a half-tipsy fool in a public conveyance. He clutched his hands hard and kept his temper; he preferred to sit still and take no outer notice.

Hugh mistook his enforced calm for cowardice and panic. 'Aha!' he cried again, 'so you see, my fine friend, you've been found out! You've been exposed and discredited. You've got no defence for your mean secretiveness. Going and hiding away a poor terrified friendless homeless girl from her only relations and natural protectors—working upon her feelings by your base vile tricks—setting your own wretched womankind to bully and badger her by day and by night, till she gives her consent at last—out of pure disgust and weariness, no doubt—to your miserable proposals. The sin and the shame of it! But you forgot you had a Man to deal with as well! You're brought to book now. I've found you out in the nick of time, and I mean to take the natural and proper advantage of my fortunate discovery. Listen here to me, now: before I shoot you, I propose to make you know my plans. I shall have my legitimate triumph out of you first. I shall tell you all; and then, you coward, I'll shoot you like a dog, and nobody on earth will ever be one penny the wiser.'

Warren saw the man had fairly reached the final stage of dangerous lunacy. He was simply raving with success and excitement. His blood was up, and he meant murder. But the painter fortunately kept his head cool. He didn't attempt to disarm or disable him as yet; he waited to see whether Hugh had or had not a pistol in his pocket. Perhaps Hugh, with still deeper cunning, was only trying to egg him on into a vain quarrel, that he might disgrace him in the end by a horribly plausible and vindictive charge of attempted robbery.

'I've won eleven thousand pounds,' Hugh went on distinctly, with marked emphasis, in short sharp sentences. 'My wife's dead, and I've inherited Whitestrand. I mean to marry Elsie Challoner. I can keep her now as she ought to be kept; I can make her the wife of a man of property. You alone stand in my way. And I mean to shoot you, just to get rid of you offhand.—Sit still there and listen: don't budge an inch, or, by heaven, I'll fire at once and blow your brains out. Lift hand or foot and you're a dead man.—Warren Relf, I mean to shoot you. No good praying and cringing for your life, like the coward that you are, for I won't listen. Even if you were to renounce your miserable claim to my Elsie this moment, I wouldn't spare you; I'd shoot you still. You shall be punished for your presumption—a creature like you; and when you're dead and buried, I shall marry Elsie.—Think of me, you cringing miserable cur—when you're dead and gone, enjoying myself for ever with Elsie.—Yes, I mean to make you drink it, down to the very dregs. Hear me out. You shall die like a dog; and I shall marry Elsie.'

Warren Relf's eye was fixed upon him hard, watching him close, as a cat watches, ready to spring, by an open mouse-hole. This dangerous madman must be disarmed at all hazards, the moment he showed his deadly weapon. For Elsie's sake, he would gladly have spared him that final exposure. But the man, in his insolent drunken bravado, made parley useless and mercy impossible. It was a life-and-death struggle between them now. Warren must disarm him; nothing else was feasible.

As he watched and waited, Hugh dived with his hand into his pocket for his revolver, and drew it forth, exultant, with maniac eagerness. For a single second, he brandished it, loaded, in Warren's face, laughing aloud in his drunken joy; then he pointed it straight with deadly resolve at the painter's forehead.

MERCANTILE AGENCIES.

A CHAPTER ON TRADE INQUIRIES.

THE purpose for which these Agencies exist is to collect information regarding firms and trading companies for the guidance of banks or firms which have dealings with them. The information obtained consists of a general history of the firm from its commencement, the credit which may be safely given to it, and probably the capital at its command. Most Agencies produce annually several volumes of information, divided into towns and districts, and they contrive to give a general idea of a firm's position by ratings in a compressed form. The purchasers of these volumes—which are of course costly—are entitled to make inquiries of a closer nature regarding firms in which they are interested, and the Agencies make inquiries free of charge regarding firms not in their books. But besides the purchasers of these volumes, there are subscribers to the Agencies, who, in consideration of an annual fee, receive information regarding firms indebted to them.

The result is that in all quarters of the globe there are huge chronicles of mercantile successes and failures for the guidance of traders anxious to increase their business, but equally anxious to

avoid bad debts. Thus, if a firm of ship-builders on the Clyde receives an order from a firm in Chicago of whose standing they know nothing, they may, by telegraphing to London through a bank, ascertain in a few hours whether their new customers are safe and reliable.

In obtaining their information, various methods are employed by these Agencies. Sometimes the business community is divided into trades, and one member of the staff will have one trade which it is his duty to look after. He goes to the markets of that trade and becomes acquainted with the people connected with it. He knows in what estimation each firm is held and how far it is trusted. He records the losses of one and the tendency to speculation of another. But business men frequently go to the Agencies and make statements regarding their position, knowing that they will be inquired about; and their doing so may be of great service to them. For instance, if a trader takes up a new branch of the business in which he is engaged, he will be inquired about by all the new firms with whom he deals, and this may give rise to the remark, 'He is very much inquired about,' which suggests that he must be showing signs of weakness. But if the reason of the inquiries is known to the Mercantile Agency no harm is done. Another method of obtaining information is to call upon the firms and ask for it. This is done thoroughly in America, and statements embracing the assets, liabilities, surplus, and stock of traders are regularly recorded. The Agencies in that country seem to be fully alive to the national tendencies, for their Reports frequently contain a sentence something like: 'Claims to have a surplus of one hundred thousand dollars; has probably seventy thousand.'

But by whatever means the information is obtained, it is generally reliable and far-reaching; and if people are unfavourably spoken of, they are usually themselves to blame. An inquiry was recently made regarding a person whose address was in a street off a certain square in London; the question was, whether he was safe to trust for a thousand pounds. The reply at an Agency was: 'The address you give is a lodging-house. About a year ago a gentleman of this name took a room there. He left about three months ago, asking that letters for him might be taken in. He has not been back since. You should have references.'

A person who keeps himself in the dark in this manner and asks credit for such figures, should not be surprised if he finds it difficult to get any one to deal with him at all.

The fact that Mercantile Agencies exist and prosper is evidence that they are useful; and an important question for business men is, how far they can be useful to them. Of course, it is desirable, if not necessary, to have some information about their customers, and the usual practice is to ask their bankers, who go to the bankers of the customer. But bankers as a rule wish to speak well of their own clients, and the value of the opinion is largely measured by the temperament of the man who gives it. If he is sanguine, he will say 'Quite good.' But the Mercantile Agency may say that you should not go beyond one hundred pounds; and in this information the banker's opinion has been received and considered. In asking for information, it is

always wise to mention a sum, and that sum should not be far above the amount the person gives his bills for; otherwise, the information obtained may be misleading. There are firms who always make their inquiries for fancy amounts, because they say they only wish to do business with first-class people. This is very unjust, because the firm may have no occasion for, and may never ask credit for anything like the amount; and the fact that they are inquired about for such a sum may lead to the belief that they are trading beyond what their capital warrants. Most bankers, when their customers are inquired about for sums which they know to be fancy, refuse to give any answer whatever until the transaction is explained to them.

Properly used, there is no reason why Mercantile Agencies should not be a valuable guide to traders, and in many cases save them from long-firm and other swindles, which are supported almost solely by the credulity and indiscretion of merchants. The answers, 'A swindle' and 'Avoid' are the danger-signals; 'Perfectly safe' and 'Quite good' are the green lights. But even when a warning is given, the disposition to do business is so strong that it is often disregarded or disbelieved. A provincial firm recently inquired through their bankers regarding the standing of A, B, & Co., London, and whether they were good for one thousand pounds. The answer was: 'They only started a year ago; there is no A and no B in the firm, and caution is advised.' The provincial firm wrote again through their bankers that there must be some mistake; that the partners were G and F; that G told them he had rich friends, and that the amount mentioned was not too large.—Further inquiries being made, it was found that A, B, & Co. could give no satisfactory reason for trading under an assumed name; that both partners had been bankrupt a few years before—one of them under suspicious circumstances—and that bills had been seen drawn by the firm on one of the partners. The warning was more than justified, but probably it would not be regarded.

Another very important point for traders is the light in which they are viewed by the Mercantile Agencies. This also may be useful to them, particularly if they are young firms with their credit still to be established and developed. It is folly for them to ignore these institutions, or to maintain a prejudice against them because they rake up bygone misfortunes. This is not done needlessly; but it is clear that if a firm has stopped payment a few years before, it is not likely to be strong; and a fair opinion of its trustworthiness cannot be formed without taking the fact into consideration. Besides, the cause of the failure is usually stated, and if no discredit attaches to it, its importance is greatly minimised. When new firms or individuals endeavour to establish themselves, therefore, they are usually dependent upon credit for the means required to conduct their business. That credit which is readily accorded to an old established house with a good record is not given to them in a day. They have to show that they deserve it, and the Mercantile Agencies have immense influence in determining to what extent they are worthy of it. These facts should make young firms very careful of anything which might have a prejudicial effect. The first thing to

be thought of is character, which means honour and uprightness in every transaction the name has ever been connected with. Promptitude in meeting every bill as it becomes due is also essential. If this is not done, it is evident that a promising young firm may soon become, by simple carelessness, one of those hand-to-mouth concerns which employ the energy of the partners in staving off from day to day the inevitable crash. Further, every transaction which is not strictly in the way of business, or which a business man would have a difficulty in understanding, should be avoided, because it is sure to give rise to suspicion and have the worst possible construction put upon it. A firm should not get mixed up with any other concern outside their own line of business. 'Too many irons in the fire' is, as a rule, neither desirable, profitable, nor safe.

Most large firms have begun small, and the smallest firms aim at being large. Let them observe the ordinary rules of prudence, which even the largest firms cannot afford to dispense with, and their progress will be more rapid and sure. The knowledge that Mercantile Agency lights are shining upon them should have a salutary influence upon them and upon trade universally.

BOLSOVER BROTHERS.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER IV.—CONCLUSION.

THE secretary laid down the Report, took off his spectacles, and looked across the table at Mr Bysouth.

'And that is as far as you have gone?' queried the latter.

'That is our present limit; and I am really at a loss to know what further steps it behoves us to take in this very strange affair. Mr Bolsover is urgently pressing us for an immediate settlement of his claim, on the plea that business of importance will entail his lengthened absence from England in the course of a week or two. We have put the fellow off twice already; but I hardly know what excuse to make for further delay—more especially as the "Heron" has always prided itself on its promptitude in settlement. All the documents required by us have been duly supplied, and all are undoubtedly genuine; and yet in the face of these two Reports it seems impossible to doubt that there is fraud at work somewhere, the question, however, being in what direction we are to look for it, and what further efforts it is possible to make in order to unmask it. I never felt so baffled over a case before.' He lay back in his chair and nibbled the end of his quill and stared at Mr Bysouth.

'I hardly see myself what we can do further,' answered the latter, 'unless we put on a private detective to ferret into the antecedents of this Mr Bolsover, and thereby strive to find out something to his prejudice which would give us a handle for disputing, or delaying, almost indefinitely, the settlement of his claim.'

'Pardon me; but I fail to see how our doing so would help us in the way you seem to think it would,' responded the secretary. 'Even if the present Mr Bolsover should turn out to be one

of the biggest rogues unhang'd, what then? He is his brother's legally constituted heir—on that point the sworn copy of the will in our possession is perfectly clear and explicit (a will, it is true, dated only three days before the testator's demise, one of the witnesses to it being Septimus Gaze-brooke, and the other Emma Goodson, the nurse; but not disputable on that ground alone), so that if we pay the money, he and he alone is the man to whom we are bound to hand it over.' He nibbled at his quill for a few moments again, and then he said: 'I will take the papers home once more and sleep on them, or try to do so. Possibly a happy thought of some kind may come to me before morning.'

At this juncture there came a knock at the door and then a clerk entered from the outer office. 'There's a man in the waiting-room,' he said, addressing the secretary, 'who states that he is from Medbury Royal, and that he wants to see the Mr Lomax who was there about a week ago making inquiries about a Mr Bolsover. As Mr Lomax happens to be out, sir, what shall I say to the man?'

'Show him in here.' The secretary and Mr Bysouth exchanged glances.

Next minute there entered a thick-set, plain-featured, but by no means unintelligent-looking man—a working-man evidently, but at present dressed in his Sunday suit, in which he seemed by no means at his ease. He made an awkward little bow as he came in, and then stood holding his hat in front of him with both hands.

'Take a chair, Mr _____. By the way, I have not the pleasure of knowing your name,' said Mr Smiley pleasantly.

'My name is William Bonsor, master-carpenter of Medbury Royal,' answered the man as he sat down gingerly on one of the leather-covered office chairs.

'And I am Mr Smiley, the secretary of the Heron Company. It was at my request that Mr Lomax went down to Medbury the other day to make certain inquiries with regard to the late Mr Evan Bolsover. Probably you were acquainted with Mr Bolsover?'

'No, sir; I was not. I never spoke to the gent in my life, though I've seen him many a time. But my wife's mother, Mrs Mims, knew him well, having been his housekeeper up to the time that he died.'

Mr Smiley drew a deep silent breath.

'Mrs Mims was one amongst others whom Mr Lomax saw when at Medbury. She appears to have answered all his questions very satisfactorily.'

'Yes, sir; I've no doubt she did that, when once the gent had hammered the nail of his questions well into her head. But she never thought of going beyond what he asked her, or of telling him something that was known to her and to nobody else. She's a curious body in her way, but by no means so chumpled-headed as many folk make her out to be.'

'Mr Lomax seems to have had a sort of feeling that there was something in the background which he had not succeeded in getting at; but of course he was unable even to guess whether it was anything of consequence or not.'

'There was something in the background, sir; not kept there wilfully, as I've said already,

or out of any wish to hide things up, and it's that something I've come here to-day to tell you, because I think you ought to know it.' Mr Bonsor coughed behind his hand and then he said: 'Mr Bolsover—the dead one, I mean—was insured in your office for rather a heavy amount, wasn't he, sir?'

'The policy he effected with us was for the sum of five thousand pounds.'

Mr Bonsor gave vent to a low whistle.

'And he had only paid one half-year's premium when he died,' added Mr Smiley.

'And that made you a bit suspicious-like, and no wonder. Well, sir, I don't know whether what I've come to tell you will be found to have any bearing on the case, but, anyhow, I think it only right you should know of it. It was only yesterday it came to my ears. My wife told me, her mother having told her a few hours before, which was the first either of us had heard of it. It seems that after Mr Lomax's visit, Grannie, as the young uns call her, got chewing things over a bit in her mind, and at last she began to fancy that, maybe, she had done wrong in not telling him all she knew, although, mind you, she had answered all his questions fair and above-board. The more she thought it over, the more worried and uneasy she grew, till at last she felt as if she must tell somebody, and get the opinion of a second party as to whether she had done right or wrong; so the end of it was she told her own daughter, Polly, like the sensible woman she is, insisted on telling me; so now you will understand, sir, how it comes about that I am here this afternoon.'

Mr Bonsor paused for a moment to blow his nose. Mr Smiley, metaphorically, was on tenter-hooks, but he was far too diplomatic to betray anything of what he felt. His visitor must be allowed to tell his story his own way.

'And now, sir, I'll come to what Grannie had to tell my Polly. It seems that she had a strong hankering to see her master after the poor man was dead (one never can account for the queer fancies some women have); but the door of the room where he lay was locked, and the second Mr Bolsover had the key, and she was too nervous to tell him what she wanted. So, taking the opportunity when he was out of the way, she opened the door with a key belonging to another room which happened to fit the lock, and went in. Well might she say to my Polly that she felt sure her eyes must be playing her some fool's trick. When she stared round, Mr Smiley, sir, the room was empty—no dead man was there! Grannie was not satisfied till she had peered under the bed, and even into the wardrobe; but no Mr Bolsover was to be found. Then she went out, locking the door again and taking away the key, but not whispering a word to anybody.' Mr Bonsor paused and looked at Mr Smiley.

'The news you bring is very strange news indeed, Mr Bonsor,' said the secretary after a few moments, 'and it may not impossibly prove of the utmost value to us in the inquiry we are at present instituting.—Mr Bolsover was stated to have died on the afternoon or evening of Tuesday the 15th. Do you happen to know on which day it was that Mrs Mims visited the locked-up room?'

'It was on the Thursday morning early, before the other Mr Bolsover arrived at the Cottage.'

'It was on the evening of that day, Thursday, that the undertakers are said to have fetched away the body for conveyance to London.'

'I have something yet to tell you, sir, bearing on that part of the business,' said Mr Bonsor in his quiet phlegmatic way.

'Indeed! I shall be most pleased to listen to you.'

Thereupon Mr Bonsor proceeded to narrate a certain little circumstance with which the reader is already acquainted—namely, the fixing by Mrs Mims of two pins and a piece of cotton on the inner side of the door of Laburnum Cottage, and how, on going there at an early hour next morning, she found her simple trap exactly as she had left it. But while the housekeeper had only done as she did with the object of satisfying her own somewhat morbid curiosity, she had unconsciously been acting as an invaluable agent for the Heron Insurance Company, and had unwittingly been the means of unmasking one of the most barefaced frauds that was ever attempted to be perpetrated.

Presently Mr Bonsor was dismissed with many thanks, and a promise that the service he had rendered should before long meet with some more substantial recognition than mere barren expressions of good-will.

'The arch scoundrel!' exclaimed Mr Smiley as soon as he and Mr Bysouth were left alone.

'After all, then, it would seem that the funeral was a sham one,' remarked the chairman.

'There can be little doubt on that score now.'

'And the two Mr Bolsovers?'

'Will be found to have been one and the same person.'

'Mr Gazebooke?'

'A confederate, without a doubt. These things are rarely carried through single-handed.'

'Both the nurse and the doctor must have been in the plot.'

'Undoubtedly. The young doctor's strange discomposure when Lomax introduced himself is now accounted for. It seems a thousand pities that a man in his position should have lent himself to so nefarious a scheme.'

When, between six and seven o'clock the following evening, two officers of police proceeded to No. 38 Persimmon Street, they found the nest empty and the birds flown. Those they were in search of could not have been long gone, seeing that in one of the rooms a partly burnt envelope was found bearing a postmark of the day before. By what means, or through what agency, they had been warned in time to enable them to make good their escape, was never discovered.

Further inquiry in the course of the following day brought to light another fact—that Dr Lindley also had disappeared. In his case it was afterwards made clear whence his warning had come. It seems that, a little time before, he had attended one of Bonsor's children through a bad attack of fever, and had so impressed the master-carpenter's wife with his skill and kindness on that occasion, that while her husband was away in London, she went to the young doctor without saying a word to any one, and hinted to him on what errand her husband

had left home. She, of course, knew that Dr Lindley had attended Mr Bolsover; but how far he might be implicated in the matter which had taken her husband to London, she could only vaguely surmise. In any case, as she said to herself, it could do him no harm to put him on his guard, and it might chance to do him a lot of good.

No effort was made to trace or follow Lindley, who by-and-by found employment as an uncle in Canada. In the course of time his uncle, to whom he had made a clean breast of everything, forgave him, and, later on, bought a practice for him in one of the largest cities of the Dominion, where, in lack of any news to the contrary, it may be assumed that he still lives and flourishes, wiser and, it may reasonably be hoped, a better man.

As to the mode by which the acceptance for the eighty pounds came into Gazebooke's possession, Lindley was never enlightened, and it was a mystery which, for obvious reasons, he thought it as well to allow to remain unsolved.

Some three years later than the events herein narrated, Messrs Bolsover and Gazebooke—under different aliases—made a compulsory appearance before an aggrieved public, they having been brought to book in consequence of some long-firm frauds of a more than ordinarily audacious kind in which they were found to be the leading spirits. Thus were two enterprising careers brought to a premature close for a long period to come. Both of them were men who had been well brought up, and who had started in life with many advantages; but temptation had come in their way; they had not had strength of mind to resist it, but had fallen, as fall so many others. The so-called Nurse Goodson proved to be the wife of Bolsover and the sister of Gazebooke.

THE AUSTRALIAN DINGO AT HOME.

AMONG the strange animals produced by Australia—its kangaroos, varying in size from six feet in height when fully erect to that of a diminutive mouse; its pigmy geese, which perch upon the tops of high trees; its gigantic kingfishers; its mewing cat-fishes, and its egg-laying platypus and ant-eater—the country brings forth another animal which has puzzled naturalists almost as much as any of the foregoing, by reason of its singular association with its marsupial companions—the Dingo, or native Australian wolf. The only four-footed creature on that vast continent which does not either carry its immature young in a pouch or rear them from eggs, it seems totally out of place among the strange forms by which it is surrounded. It is as truly a wolf as any that ranges the Black Forest or hunts the wapiti in North America; a fleet and powerful animal, which makes an easy prey of the defenceless kangaroos, but never in any circumstances attacks man.

How did this 'dog' manage to obtain a footing in Australia? Is it the descendant of domestic dogs accidentally left on shore by early European navigators? Was it brought into the island by the present aborigines; or is it a truly indigenous animal, a genuine member of the fauna from which it differs so essentially? These are the

questions naturalists have been asking themselves ever since the animal became known ; and there is no immediate prospect that a direct answer will be found, although we can approach very near to the truth by inferences from all the circumstances. The theory of the dingo's possible descent from any domestic variety introduced by early discoverers may easily be disposed of. No captain of a ship would be likely to leave his dog, the pet of the ship, on an island which he had just discovered. The first settlers of course took their dogs with them ; but they found, to their cost, as soon as they turned out sheep on the Australian pastures, that the dingoes were already numerous, and to be met with everywhere—from Port Jackson to Port Phillip, a distance of some four hundred miles ; and when the coast was further explored at various points, extending over at least seven thousand miles, there was the ubiquitous dingo.

The country has been known only about a hundred years. It is incredible, then, that any dog introduced by white men could within that period have spread far and wide over a territory some two-thirds the extent of Europe, and have penetrated to the remote interior. In whatever direction the sheep-farmer advances, and however far back into the bush he takes his flocks—even to six hundred miles from the coast—he is certain to find this enemy ready to attack the fleecy strangers at all times of the day or night.

From all the circumstances, we are driven to the most probable conclusion that this dog was either imported at a very remote period by the aborigines, possibly from New Guinea, where it is also found, or that it is a remnant of a still more remote era when Australia and Asia were part of one continuous land surface.

The dingo is a distinctly handsome animal, of sable colour, the tail, which is frequently full and bushy, being always tipped for about three inches with white ; while the chest has a white patch about the size of a man's hand. The weight of a fine dog will reach sixty pounds. The head is rounder and broader than that of the ordinary wolf, and the muzzle relatively shorter. Black specimens are occasionally met with ; but these are merely instances of *melanism*, of the same character as the black rabbits sometimes seen in an English wood, and do not constitute a different species. Visitors to the London Zoological Gardens during the past seven years will perhaps have noticed a pair in the cage adjoining that of the Asiatic wolves. These were genuine wild dingoes, caught in Australia, though not very fine specimens to the eye of one accustomed to those to be found on the wooded broken country about the Maranoa and Warrego rivers in Queensland. All the wild dogs of the world breed more or less frequently in captivity, and the dingo is no exception. The writer remembers a litter of pups in the Zoological Gardens about four years ago, one of which, curiously enough, was black and white, a mixture quite unknown in the wild state. While these pups allowed themselves to be handled freely by strangers, and behaved very much in the manner we are accustomed to expect in the young of our domestic dogs, the mother retired shyly into a corner. It would seem, then, that as soon as they became acquainted with human beings they showed that disposition to make

themselves familiar which has rendered the dog the friend of man in every part of the world.

Dingoes have often been exhibited at English dog-shows. We were invited on one occasion to inspect the kennels of an exhibitor, Mr W. K. Taunton, well known for his interest in foreign breeds, who, somewhat to our temporary consternation, suddenly opened a door, whence an animal, easily recognised at the first glance as a dingo, dashed into the yard and bounded towards us. After a critical examination of our trousers with his nose, that no doubt assured him in some mysterious manner of the respectability of his visitors, he paid us the compliment of mumbling our hands in his mouth rather roughly but playfully, and in various canine ways showed his satisfaction with his new acquaintances ; though he had not many months previously been running wild in the Australian bush and regarding man as his deadliest enemy. This was one of the very finest specimens we ever saw, and as a matter of course 'Captain Burton' carried off all the prizes in his class wherever he went.

The female dingo takes much pains to bring up her family in a safe retreat. This is sometimes selected among broken masses of rock upon the side of a hill ; but in the vast stretches of heavily timbered country, where no such shelter can be obtained, she must put up with a hollow log. Many of the fallen trees have been blown down by hurricanes, or have died of old age as they stand, when colonies of white ants attack the roots ; and the trunks having no longer any hold on the earth, necessarily fall. In process of time the white ants gradually destroy the whole of the inner wood, which crumbles to a powder easily scraped out by an animal. In the pipe thus formed the dingo finds a suitable nesting-place. When out on the run one day with our flock, the sheep-dog attracted attention to a hollow log by his energetic demonstrations ; and on the following morning we cut a hole some ten or twelve feet from the open end, and cautiously inserted our arm up to the shoulder, when a good deal of snarling and snapping and the feel of a fury coat betrayed the presence of a litter of four dingo pups, who were abstracted, and promptly despatched in the interests of the sheep. The young are singularly unlike their parents, of sooty brown colour, and entirely devoid of the white tip to the tail and white chest-mark which come after the change of the juvenile coat. In the far 'back bush' young dingoes may often be seen in the camps of the blacks. It is a remarkable fact that these perfectly wild dogs take to their human masters and join in their hunting expeditions, and never, if the assertions of the blacks are to be trusted, show any disposition to return to the wild condition—so great is the influence of man over the inferior creation, even when he is represented by such poor specimens of humanity as these Australian savages.

The natural food of the dingo is, of course, any animal he can catch, the smaller kangaroos and bandicoots especially ; but he prefers lamb to any other food, as the squatters know only too well, though mutton in any shape is always welcome. Wherever dingoes abound, as they do in all forest country, the utmost watchfulness of the shepherd is needed. In the daytime he must be constantly on the alert to see that the enemy does not

suddenly rush in among the flock and cut off a 'point,' that is to say, a party of a dozen or a score, and send the remainder off helter-skelter for a mile before they will stop. The reader will bear in mind that the country is totally different from that on which sheep graze in this part of the world, or any other except Australia. Generally speaking, the shepherd has under his charge a flock of more than a thousand active sheep, feeding in a forest of heavy timber, the ground covered with grass and undergrowth, where, at times, he can keep but a small proportion of his charges under view. The dingo has thus many opportunities for sneaking up and making a rush at the defenceless sheep, even when a good dog is on the watch. If the enemy succeeds in his attack, a number of sheep will probably be lost, driven from their companions and scattered in all directions, to become the easy prey of the dingoes for miles round about; while the remainder of the flock are nervous, suspicious, and difficult to manage for some days afterwards. One instance will suffice to show the destructive propensities of these animals. A shepherd came in to the head station one afternoon from his hut, distant some four miles, to report the loss of about a hundred sheep, which had been cut off from his flock by two or three dingoes. Men and dogs immediately started in pursuit, and the missing ones were found towards evening in a sad plight. The dingoes with their invariable cunning had rushed the stupid creatures up to the bank of a creek, or small deep stream, and had amused themselves by racing round them, biting through their hind-legs, and literally in some instances tearing the flesh off their hind-quarters. Many were quite dead, many fatally injured, and at least half of the number had been snapped here and there by the cruel jaws of their assailants. Patches of bloody wool lay about in every direction; and so utterly stupefied with fear were the miserable wretches that they remained jammed in a compact mass until dragged away one by one and committed to the care of the dogs. All this havoc had been wrought in a short time by two or certainly not more than three of the savage marauders.

At night, the shepherd's anxiety may be even greater than in the daytime. His hut is close to the sheep-yard—a circular enclosure of stakes driven into the earth, and strongly bound together with rails and interlaced saplings. Suddenly he may be awakened by an ominous sound like distant thunder—the sheep rushing round inside the yard. Outside for certain there is a dingo, or perhaps two, galloping round, in the hope of so frightening the sheep that they may break out of the yard, when nothing would prevent them from dispersing in all directions. For some reason, the dingoes seem reluctant to jump into the enclosure, which they could do with the greatest ease. There is little doubt that, but for the prompt interference of the shepherd, these constant rushes of the sheep—the weight of hundreds pressing against a weak part of the fence—would have the desired effect. A breach once made, the sheep would pour through it into the jaws of their expectant foes.

In every shepherd's possession will be found a small bottle of strichnine. When a sheep dies anywhere, in the yard or out on the run, it is his duty to skin it, hang up the pelt on the fence, or

carry it home with him, make several shallow cuts in the body, and with the point of his knife drop into each a grain or so of the deadly poison, for the benefit of the dingoes. The sheep-dogs are taught never to touch these carcasses; but occasionally they do fall victims to the bait intended for their wild relations. Advantage is taken of a habit of the dingo to compass his destruction thus: he seems very fond of following a man, especially on foot, and still more so the ration-carrier when taking round a packhorse laden with salt beef and groceries for the shepherds. He keeps at a respectful distance, perhaps on the chance of picking up anything that may be dropped. Much to his satisfaction, he finds a nice piece of fresh beef or mutton just enough to be swallowed at one gulp. In the middle of that *bonne bouche* is a grain of strichnine, and within half an hour he is the best of all dingoes—a dead dingo. The ration-carrier has a canvas bag full of such tempting morsels, which it is hoped will settle accounts with some old offender against the peace of the flock.

In its native state the dingo never barks, but utters a prolonged mournful howl, exactly like that of a domestic dog when he 'bays the moon.' The howl is the vocal expression all over the world of the wolf's feelings, barking being an acquirement developed only in human society. The keeper at the Zoological Gardens told us, however, that both the dingoes there, brought from widely distant parts of Australia, learned to bark in a very short time after their arrival—he thought from a pair of half-bred Eskimo and Newfoundland dogs in the adjoining kennel.

Fortunately, the dingoes, even where numerous, do not hunt in any considerable packs, four or five being rarely seen in company; otherwise, they would have made the rapid pastoral occupation of Australia impossible. On dark, sultry nights they prowl close to station buildings, on the lookout for anything that may be snapped up. A party of us, sitting on the veranda to catch whatever air might be stirring one of these oppressive nights, heard at intervals the howls and snarlings of two or three dingoes about the open space in front of the house. Domestic dogs are always inimical to their wild brethren; and our little black-and-tan terrier felt himself capable of doughty deeds on this particular occasion, if his haughty spirit may be measured by his furious excursions into the darkness and his challenges to the enemy at the top of his high-pitched voice. 'Jock' had returned several times to the veranda well satisfied with the results of his prowess, for had he not struck terror into the breasts of the enemy? That occasional growl as he lay between us betokened his perception of stealthy footsteps wholly inaudible to us, and with a shrill yell he once more dashed out into the darkness. Suddenly the sharp barking ended in a stifled cry, and silence reigned supreme for the rest of the evening. We turned into our blankets with sad hearts, for there could be no doubt that the gallant little fellow had been snapped up and eaten by the dingoes.

Whatever the reason may be, some dingoes will not take poisoned baits. It seems impossible that they can detect the strichnine by smell—at least it has no odour for us—but should ever so small a portion be on the outside of the meat, its intensely

bitter taste would be likely to make the animal drop it instantly. Once it is swallowed, its effect is certain; for this poison, unlike many others, never causes even the sensitive stomach of the dog to reject it by vomiting. In some districts where there is no natural permanent water-supply, the sheep are watered at small ponds filled from wells sunk in the earth. In the hot season, one of these ponds is poisoned, all the others being watched day and night to prevent the dingoes from visiting them. No one goes near the poisoned pond, so that at last the animals, impelled by thirst, are driven to drink the fatal water. Like all wild dogs, they are exceedingly difficult to trap or snare. It is an axiom with them that everything which has been touched by the hand of man should be regarded with suspicion.

Although they make most havoc among the young lambs, lying in wait to snap up the unsuspecting friskers from the very sides of their mothers, newly-born calves sometimes fall victims to the rapacity of the dingoes. They never venture to make any attack while the cow is present; but when she goes off to slake her burning thirst at the nearest water, leaving her helpless offspring for a few minutes, they pounce upon the weakly calf, and, tearing out its entrails, snatch a hasty meal before she returns to find the object of her affection past all maternal solicitude.

Recent accounts from the Darling river district show that the dingoes, finding such an abundance of easily procured food in the rabbits, have again begun to increase in numbers. One unfortunate sheep-farmer has had all the lambs but one from two hundred stud ewes destroyed by the pests; and many others have suffered in proportion.

We will conclude this paper by giving an instance of the sagacity displayed by dingoes in hunting their natural prey. The writer, accompanied by one of the stockmen on a large cattle-run in the Warrego district, went to hunt up some stray horses among the broken ranges; and in order to be on the safe side, two days' rations of salt-beef and 'damper' with the inevitable tea and sugar were provided. We had just rolled up our blankets, after camping out, preparatory to making up the fire and putting the billies on to boil, when we heard the heavy thud of a kangaroo leaping rapidly in a neighbouring scrub. 'It was the work of a moment,' as the old-fashioned novelists used to say, to get out our revolvers on the chance of a shot; but we paused to watch an interesting sight. A dingo was stealing swiftly along the edge of the scrub, parallel to the course of the kangaroo, and in ordinary circumstances a leaden messenger would have been promptly sent after him, with all the more probability of stopping him, as he paused occasionally to listen; but possible kangaroo steak was just then uppermost in our minds. In a minute or two the kangaroo suddenly broke for the open country, and the dingo, for whom he was evidently unprepared, made a splendid dash and pinned the marsupial by the shoulder. Almost instantly afterwards, a second dingo, who had no doubt been driving the game towards his companion, rushed out of the scrub and took the kangaroo on the opposite side. In spite of the poor beast's violent bounds hither

and thither, he soon rolled over, and in an astonishingly short time the dingoes had put an end to his struggles. 'A fresh feed for certain now,' whispered the stockman, and we began crawling on our hands and knees towards the spot, about a hundred yards away, for a shot at the dingoes, who had been too much occupied in the excitement of the chase to notice us. The slightest noise, the chance breaking of a dead twig, or perhaps the motion of a tall blade of grass, sufficed to alarm them, and though the revolver bullets cut up the earth close to them, both went away unscathed. The kangaroo was quite dead. How they had mauled him in those two or three minutes! His chest was torn open under the foreleg, and his neck bitten through and through. These wild dogs seem to know instinctively where the great arteries are situated, and, unlike our domestic hounds, understand perfectly well how to kill a kangaroo without incurring the risk of a fatal stroke from its powerful hindlegs, armed with those formidable chisel-like nails. Some fresh-cut steaks off the loin put us in good trim for the day's work.

'MIXED' QUOTATIONS.

NOTWITHSTANDING that many writers of repute have strongly condemned the use of quotations, it may confidently be asserted that a good quotation hardly ever comes amiss; and in many cases, as a gentleman who had a penchant for a little Greek observed, 'it wonderfully livens up a composition.' 'It is a pleasing break in the thread of a speech or writing,' says Mr W. F. H. King, in *Classical and Foreign Quotations*, 'allowing the speaker or writer to retire for an instant while another and a greater makes himself heard. A well-chosen quotation lightens up the page like a fine engraving, and, in the phrase of Addison, adds a supernumerary beauty to a paper, the reader often finding his imagination entertained by a hint that awakens in his memory some beautiful passage of a classic author.'

But the great objection to the use of other men's thoughts is that integrity of quotation—which is the least return that can be made—is rarely observed, more especially in public speaking, when the excitement of the moment frequently causes quotations to become mixed. The real cause, however, of most common forms of misquotation is the fact that man's memory is imperfect, and is often apt to prove treacherous at the last emergency. However often a striking passage may have been repeated, one can never feel certain that on some occasion two or more words will not be confounded, and consequently that the whole of the quotation will not be spoiled.

Man's weakness in mixing up quotations, allusions, and 'parts of speech,' has been frequently used in literature as a device for raising laughter. Costard, the clown in *Love's Labour's Lost*, apes the court-wit of Queen Elizabeth's time, and misapplies and miscalls like Mrs Partington or Master Dogberry; and everybody knows how important a factor the blunders of Mrs Mala-

prop are in the humour of Sheridan's delightful comedy. Thackeray, too, frequently resorted to this device. Take two examples from the *Yellow-plush Papers*: 'O fie! don't lay that flattering function to your sole, as Milton observes.'—'I think it's Playto, or els Harrystotle, who observes that what we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.' Of more modern authors, Miss Braddon has perhaps the greatest weakness for putting misquotations into the mouths of her characters, her sporting baronets being almost invariably 'great at' quoting from 'that fellow Shakespeare.'

Dickens, as everybody must have noticed, had a decided leaning in this direction. Not to mention Captain Cuttle, Dick Swiveller ('who was in the habit of running on with scraps of verse as if they were only prose in a hurry'), and others, we find Mr Pecksniff frequently mixing up quotations and allusions. Said that gentleman: 'Unlike the young man in the Eastern tale who is described as a one-eyed almanack, if I am not mistaken, Mr Pinch?'—'A one-eyed calendar, I think, sir,' said Tom.—'They are pretty nearly the same thing, I believe,' said Mr Pecksniff, smiling compassionately. Nearly all the principal characters in *Martin Chuzzlewit* are made to commit blunders something after this style; and, indeed, no inconsiderable portion of the fun in Dickens's writings depends upon the characters either 'dropping into poetry' or 'mixing' quotations.

On the score of 'realism,' objection might perhaps be taken to the proposition that footmen and nurses are in the habit of quoting and alluding to the classics; but as we are all disposed to allow a good deal of license to the novelist, it may be admitted that the habit of relying largely on mixed quotations for producing amusement is legitimate. In novels dealing with the higher grades of life, indeed, such a course, if not carried to excess, would be true to nature, since almost everybody is fond of showing his or her 'book-learned skill,' and consequently of occasionally misquoting, though rarely to such an extent as that worthy baronet who, according to the perfectly trustworthy testimony of Thomas Ingoldeby, gave an entirely new reading to a famous passage:

Who steals my purse steals stuff!—
'Twas mine—tisn't his—nor anybody else's!
But he who runs away with my good name,
Robe me of what does not do him any good,
And makes me deuced poor!

Burlesque apart, however, this 'familiar quotation,' in common with the 'Tis true, 'tis pity,' &c., and Byron's lines commencing, 'Freedom's battle once begun,' is frequently murdered.

The well-known verse in Matthew about 'Not one jot or tittle' is a great stumbling-block to preachers. It is stated of a well-known preacher who tried to quote it that he rendered it not one 'tot or jittle.' Then he saw that he had erred, and tried again. 'Not one jitt or tottle,' said he, and again stopped. But he would not give up, and began, 'Not one tit or jottle,' and then with a red face he abandoned the attempt and went on with his sermon.

The majority of mixed quotations rarely fall short of being absurd. Many, again, are hashed

owing to the confusion of two or more words, as a leader-writer completely murdered Shakespeare's well-known line, 'An honest tale speeds best being plainly told,' by transposing the words 'honest' and 'plainly.' Another common blunder consists in attributing quotations to the wrong authors; and in this connection, by-the-by, everybody must occasionally wonder how many good things have been fathered on Shakespeare! Quotations from all sorts of poets and of all ages, from Spenser to Tennyson (both inclusive), are 'put down to the Bard,' as a theatrical 'catchword,' once very popular, phrased it, without the slightest compunction. But if sense-memory were cultivated instead of syllabic memory, which almost always requires one to begin at the beginning, and quotations, in case of doubt, ascribed to 'the poet,' there would be fewer blunders of this kind.

AN ADVENTURE IN THE FLOODED THEISS.

OUR 'oldest inhabitant' in this part of Hungary has seen some unpleasant weather in his time: summer droughts that withered every green thing, autumn waterspouts that washed the townsfolk out of their beds; but for a winter of snow, he remembers nothing like this year of 1888. The snow was everywhere, blocking railway trains, obliterating roads, burying hamlets in one night, so that the dwellers therein had to get out of their houses by the chimneys. The vast Hungarian plain was hidden for weeks under a white shroud; and in the Carpathians, the snow was so deep that valleys were levelled up, and forests were unseen beneath their covering of ice crystals.

All through the spring even, till the Ides of March were come and gone, the frost never relaxed its grip upon mountain and plain; thus the storage of accumulated snow was in no way reduced; and we knew there would be mischief when the warm winds came, more especially if the thaw were sudden.

My home is about twelve miles from the Theiss, on a spur of the Tokay Hills. I am very glad to be at a respectful distance from the river, particularly since the engineers in their wisdom have seen fit to interfere with nature in a way she will not stand. The Theiss in its natural course describes a perpetual letter S after descending from the mountains; but the engineers, in what they call regulating the river, have shortened its meanderings by cutting straight canals across the turnings and twistings. The result is that the melted snows come down from the Carpathians in as many days now as formerly in weeks, and in consequence the floods are much more destructive than they used to be. This spring, as we feared, the change of temperature was very sudden, and then every day came fresh tales of disaster. The Theiss was reported to be in places thirty-five feet above its summer level. I was anxious to see how things really were, and so I started off one morning with my servant in a light cart, intending

to go firstly to Tokay. We drove along all right for an hour ; but on approaching the village of Kerester, on the Bodrog, we found the principal street already three feet in water, and the river was reported to be rising. The people were busy moving out their goods and chattels in boats ; and there was much tribulation and wringing of hands, for the houses, of sun-dried bricks, were many of them melting away in the brown waters. We pushed on by the main road, but found ourselves stopped by something like six feet of water. I determined to send my servant on with the trap by a rough disused road over the hill, while I struck across the vineyards by a bee-line to the town. It was just hereabouts that Klapka the Hungarian defeated the Austrian General Sellick in 1849—a memorable day in the War of Independence.

After a toilsome trudge over the uneven ground, I soon came upon an extensive view to the eastward, and saw for myself the ravages the floods had already made. The aspect of the country was quite changed, for there was an extensive lake where fertile fields had been, and many familiar landmarks were submerged. Reaching Tokay, I learnt that sixty houses had fallen, and many others showed ominous cracks and settlements. After an early dinner at the inn, which fortunately was above high-water mark, I hurried off to an embankment where they were making every effort to keep back the invading waters : if they failed, a fresh tract of country would be flooded. It was a scene of great activity—carts drawn by white oxen with enormous horns were perpetually bringing up sack-loads of earth to build up the defence ; numbers of soldiers were at work, so that it had something the aspect of a place besieged. Near by, the government have a large salt-store : the water was rushing through like a millrace—three thousand tons had been already washed away. Leaving my own conveyance at Tokay, I procured a lighter but rougher cart to drive to the village of Tardos, as I wished to see how things were going on farther down the Theiss. The village is situated on a natural ridge, so that we had a stiff pull at the last bit of the road. On attaining the summit, we realised at once how extensive the floods were here. With my field-glass I could see a few houses of Tisza-Eszlar standing out of the water. This was the place made so notorious three or four years ago by the alleged murder of a Christian girl by the Jews.

At Tardos I procured a boat to take me across to Tisza-Lök, as it was my intention to stay a day or two at Baron V—'s place in the immediate neighbourhood of this small town. My boatman, an intelligent old man, enlarged upon the engineering mistakes that had been made in regulating the Theiss. 'You can't stack up water like a rick of hay,' said he, 'and you can't make straight what God ordained should be crooked. The floods are far worse than they used to be. What is wanted is a free outlet for the rivers of Hungary at the Iron Gates of the Danube ; but politics get mixed up with things as ought to be done down there.' He was a shrewd old fellow, and had hit the right nail on the head.

We were some time getting across the river, for it was nearly two miles wide, and the current was strong ; besides, we had to take care of submerged

trees, snags, and such-like. There was a magnificent sunset, which dyed the waters crimson, so that earth and sky were mingled in a glowing canopy of roseate flame very wonderful to behold, but passing all too quickly. Landing while it was yet light on the top of the dam which is supposed to protect the little town or village, we beheld a terrible scene of disaster. At least two-thirds of the village of four thousand inhabitants was in ruins. The scene of confusion was indescribable. Soldiers were going about in pontoons, taking the people off from mounds, walls, or vanishing ridges of earth, to some ark of refuge on higher ground. Pieces of furniture and the bodies of dead animals were floating about in the muddy waters, that had invaded the town from the other side of the embankment. The telegraph poles had given way and were lying with their entangled wires across a mass of floating timber. It was heart-rending to see the poor people, hundreds of them, encamped out on every available bit of higher ground. Some had set up a temporary shelter of boards and matting, against which were piled such remnants of their household goods as they had saved. Here and there a cow was tethered, with a bare bundle or two of fodder, the sight of which must have filled the poor beast with dismay, if she could have thought of the morrow. The people were marvellously patient in their trouble ; but it was sad indeed to see the sick and old folk turned out without a roof to cover them. The children were mostly gay and frolicsome, thinking it all good fun, poor little souls ; they had had their suppers probably, and the doubtful breakfast was the other side of a jolly picnic night under the bright stars.

Baron V—'s place is happily well out of the reach of the flood. Of course he was occupied with directing such measures of relief as were possible in the face of this widespread disaster. A gentleman who arrived shortly after I did at the Baron's, told us he had passed a terrible time at the village of Tisza-Kénéz the night before. It seems that in the middle of the night, in profound darkness, they were roused from sleep by the dread sound of the tocsin and the shrill call of the bugle. Every soul knew at once that this meant the waters were breaking over the dike that hitherto had safeguarded them from the flood. The whole village turned out together with a detachment of a hundred soldiers. There was a hurrying to the spot where danger threatened, amidst call to arms, cries, orders, and counter-orders. 'The whole scene,' said our informant, 'was lit up by the flare of petroleum torches, darting to and fro like fireflies in the blackness, while the agitated mass of angry waters was visible under the glow of a dozen bonfires burning on the edge of the embankment.' The poor people, men, women, and children, it seems, worked with desperate energy all through the night ; and happily, when the sun rose, they were rewarded with the certain knowledge that the ruin and desolation of their homes and fields were averted, at least for the present.

The morning after my arrival at Baron V—'s I found that a relief party were to assist in conducting a raft of six hundred boards, wanted for the repairs of the dike at Tisza-Dáda, a large village some miles farther down the river. As

they were rather short of hands, I offered to go with the corporal and four men who were to accompany the raft in a pontoon. We left Tisza-Lök at one o'clock: the weather was very fine; and for about two hours we drifted slowly but surely down the stream, our pontoon being tied to the raft. But we now approached a part of the river where the banks were higher and the strength of the current much stronger, so that the navigation of the raft became extremely difficult. At length at a sudden turn of the river we encountered a regular whirlpool. Here we came in sight of a steamer that was aground. Impelled by the force of the current, the raft with our pontoon in tow bore down straight for the steamer. I thought a collision was inevitable; but by great exertion and good luck, the raftsmen kept clear of the vessel. It was the nearest shave. No sooner had we escaped this danger than we sighted an enormous snag with its roots upwards, well out of the water and right in our course. Here we were not so fortunate; spite of every effort, the raft bore straight upon the snag. We were prepared, each with an oar in his hand; but we were brought up very suddenly and sharply. The difficulty now was to disentangle the floating mass of timber from the roots of the snag. I thought the whole fabric would have broken up; but literally by hook and by crook we got our raft free, and once more we were in the full swim of the stream. We were going at great rate, and it was all very well as long as our course was straight; but the constant bends of the river were awkward. Seeing a row of partially submerged trees in front of us, we took the precaution to disconnect the pontoon; and it was well we had done so, for, carried round by the current, the raft went crashing into the trees. We saw at once that the raft was breaking up. Some of the outer logs were torn away by the swirl of the water, and drifted off in mid-stream. The men called loudly for help, which we quickly rendered them, and succeeded in rescuing two of the poor fellows who were half immersed in the water. To our dismay, we saw the other two, who were quite out of our reach, floating away on a portion of the wreck which had become detached. The logs turned round and round in the whirlpool, then headed into the very centre of the current, and were off at a pace swifter than any ordinary boat could follow them.

In our frantic efforts to give chase, our pontoon got jammed in between the trees. We were terribly afraid of a broken branch or snag knocking a hole in the iron, when our own fate might have been doubtful; so we were forced to be careful. At length we got free of this entanglement, and rowed with a will after the two luckless men, who were careering madly on their unwilling race. Fortunately they had a rope with them, and we were rejoiced to see that they threw this, lasso fashion, over some partly submerged trees. This brought them up sharp, and we thought all was well. We rowed for our lives; but our pontoon was heavy, and clumsy in the water, and did not make so much way as we could wish. We were now within fifty yards of them; another minute and we could have boarded them with the boathook,

which was held ready at the bow, when the rope that held the raftsmen snapped, and away they went on their half-dozen boards, caught as before in the strong current.

It was a terrible moment. We heard the shriek the poor fellows gave when the rope broke, and when they saw themselves whirled off again with nothing but a frail plank between them and the devouring flood. When all seemed dead against their chance of rescue, the portion of the wrecked raft was brought up by a hidden snag, that probably caught some hanging piece of chain. Now was our time. We stuck to our oars manfully; our boathook gripped their chains: we were alongside in another moment, and, thank heaven, the poor fellows were saved. I never saw men more thoroughly frightened; yet the Hungarian peasant is no coward.

We had now to make the best of our way to Dada, to render an official report of our mishap in losing the raft. It was well we had not to report the loss of life.

We found that the waters had not reached, and were not likely to reach, the large village of Dada, for it is on fairly high ground; but their farms were flooded. It is calculated that the Theiss has spread thirty miles inland; and it will probably be two years before the land is freed from the plague of waters.

IN SIGHT O' LAND.

Above the restful summer sea
The skies are clear, the winds are bland;
And the ship rides on full merrily,
In sight o' land.

Glad songs of home float on the air
From those upon the deck who stand;
And eyes grow dim and wistful there—
In sight o' land.

An hour—and friend with friend will meet,
Lip cling to lip, and hand clasp hand.
O how the heart throbs sorely sweet
In sight o' land!

But lo! athwart the radiant heaven—
(Alas for hopes by mortals planned)
The thick clouds of the storm are driven,
In sight o' land.

Cursed by confusion dark, as though
God had awhile resigned command,
The furious waves crash to and fro,
In sight o' land.

And that proud ship, which oft has crossed
The changeful sea from strand to strand,
With every soul on board, is lost
In sight o' land.

The morning comes, with joyant breath—
But cold and silent on the sand
Lie some who saw the face of death
In sight o' land.

W. F. E. L.